



Panel Three

Speaking for Themselves

A History of Self-Advocacy

Civil Rights and Independent Living

Between 1960 and 1980 the Self-Advocacy Movement became more focused. The 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* declared that “separate but equal schools” violated the 14th amendment to the Constitution. This ruling fueled the Civil Rights movement, inspiring the disability rights movement. This period is marked by changes in legislation regarding funding of public education and the emergence of new philosophies of treatment, services and access to the community.

Edward V. Roberts, who had disabilities because of polio, enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley in 1962. Roberts had to fight for on-campus housing and organized a group known as the “Rolling Quads” to advocate for increased accessibility on and off campus. The activism that Roberts practiced led to the creation of the first student-led disability services program, the first Center for Independent Living (1972) and was the cornerstone of the Independent Living Movement.

In Sweden in the late 1960s, Dr. Bengt Nirje established a recreational club for people with developmental disabilities in which members chose activities to participate. Nirje coined the concept of “Normalization,” which advocated for a more normal pattern of living and the end of the institutionalization. In 1973, the “First Convention for the Mentally Handicapped in North America” was held in Canada. In 1974, an American group of self-advocates launched “People First,” the nation’s largest and first self-advocacy organization.

Other disability rights organizations formed in this period including Disabled in Action (1970), Barrier Free Environments (1974) and the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (1975.) These groups lobbied, advocated and protested to achieve goals of social and legislative change, greater public accessibility and participation for people with disabilities in the community.

Legislative actions that helped shape the Self-Advocacy Movement during this period include The Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 1975 and The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975.

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3826 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14226 or by phone at 716-629-3626
<http://museumofdisability.org/>*



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Image Description

On the top left you will find a color image of a packed court house.

Below and to the right is a black and white image of Edward V. Roberts circa 1962. He is a Caucasian male with a thick dark beard. He is smiling in the photo. He has visible assistive breathing devices.

Below and to the right is a head shot of Dr. Bengt Nirje in black and white. A man smiling at the camera with his hand under his chin.

Below and to the right is a lightly colored building in a black and white photo with trees in front.

Below this photo is a quote pulled out stating, "In 1974, an American group of self-advocates launched "People First," the nation's largest and first self-advocacy organization," in between two parallel lines.

Below and to the left is a dark black and white image of a woman in bed.

Below and to the left is an image of a young woman with dark hair speaking and utilizing a wheelchair.

Below is an image of a hand written sign saying, "Sign 504 now". The zero in the sign is a wheelchair.

To the right is a black and white image of a building with a sign indicating, "Center for Independent Living"

Above this to the right is an Easter Seals ad indicating, "For some people, the search for an apartment is an uphill battle." There is an image of a woman in a wheelchair facing steps.

Above and to the right is a reproduction of an ad for the first wheelchair accessible coach in a souvenir folder. There is a black and white image of a bus printed on the ad.

At the bottom of the panel is a green watermark aerial view of the University of California.

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